

6450-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Bonneville Power Administration

Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan

AGENCY: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Department of Energy (DOE).

ACTION: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: Throughout the Pacific Northwest region there are several ongoing processes to develop plans and programs for the management, recovery, and mitigation of the Columbia River Basin's fish and wildlife resources. These plans and programs will help to shape a regional fish and wildlife policy direction that will guide BPA's mitigation and recovery efforts, including its funding, for the next decade or more. BPA expects to shift its fish and wildlife spending accordingly. BPA currently funds over 70 percent of the fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery efforts on behalf of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). Consequently, BPA has a responsibility to understand the impacts of those efforts and to ensure it can fund them efficiently. Therefore, BPA intends to prepare an EIS that examines the impacts that may arise from implementing one of the fish and wildlife policy directions reflected in the alternatives being considered in the ongoing regional processes. BPA will coordinate the scoping meetings and comment processes for this EIS with the other ongoing regional processes. However, BPA is preparing this EIS for its own purposes, and the EIS is not a predicate for decisions by other Federal agencies.

DATES: BPA will establish a 30-day scoping period during which all interested and affected persons and agencies are invited to comment on the scope of BPA's proposed

Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan EIS. Scoping will help BPA ensure that a full range of issues related to the implementation of its fish and wildlife duties are addressed in the EIS, and also will identify significant or potentially significant impacts that may result from implementation of such a new plan. A Notice of Scoping Meeting(s) will be published in the Federal Register. That notice will announce the date(s) and location(s) of the scoping meeting(s) and provide specific information on the close of the scoping period.

When completed, the Draft EIS will be circulated for review and comment, and BPA will hold public comment meetings for the Draft EIS. BPA will consider and respond to comments received on the Draft EIS in the Final EIS.

ADDRESSES: BPA invites comments and suggestions on the proposed scope of the Draft EIS. Send comment letters, and requests to be placed on the project mailing list, to Communications, Bonneville Power Administration – KC-7, P.O. Box 12999, Portland, Oregon, 97212. The phone number of the Communications office is 503-230-3478 in Portland; toll-free 1-800-622-4519 outside of Portland. Comments may also be sent to the BPA Internet address: comment@bpa.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Charles C. Alton, Project Manager, KEC-4, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, Oregon, 97208-3621; phone number 503-230-5878; fax number 503-230-5699.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: BPA markets electric power from 29 hydroelectric dams operated by the United States Army, Corps of Engineers (Corps); and the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (BoR), in the Pacific Northwest (Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington). Part of the power-

marketing responsibility includes complying with the laws meant to protect the environment. In the last two decades, BPA has spent over \$2 billion collected from its ratepayers on measures to mitigate and recover fish and wildlife. BPA currently spends approximately \$252 million annually, plus there are lost power opportunities and operational costs.

Under the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act (Northwest Power Act), BPA has duties: 1) to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife adversely affected by the construction and operation of the FCRPS, and 2) to do so in a manner that provides equitable treatment for such fish and wildlife with the other purposes of the FCRPS. Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA has duties to avoid jeopardy to species listed under ESA and to aid in the recovery of those species. BPA's mitigation and recovery expenditures are typically in fulfillment of these Northwest Power Act and ESA duties.

BPA expects that the entities that help guide its expenditures for mitigation and recovery will recommend changes in BPA's spending regime and programs. These recommendations could include eliminating some current mitigation projects, significantly modifying others, and initiating whole new projects. These changes in priorities may require reexamination of the impacts BPA enables through its fish and wildlife funding. Therefore, BPA is initiating an EIS to study the environmental impacts that may arise from BPA's implementation of the alternatives being considered in the other regional processes currently underway. The EIS will provide a broad-based comparison of the impacts associated with these alternatives.

The first regional process to develop alternatives that may affect the implementation of BPA's fish and wildlife duties is the Multi-Species Framework Project (Framework) which is managed collaboratively by the Northwest Power Planning Council (States), Federal agencies, and Tribes. The Framework is developing a set of alternatives for future economic and natural resource management of the basin. The EIS will consider the biological, social, and economic effects of those alternatives.

The other major Federal decision-making processes that may affect BPA's fish and wildlife duties are those associated with planning for future operations of the FCRPS, National Forest Planning activities, and plans for operation of fish hatcheries and regulation of fish harvests. Nine Federal agencies are involved in various aspects of these management activities affecting the Columbia River—the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Corps, the BoR, BPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. BPA is also participating in ESA consultations that will lead to a decision in the year 2000 regarding how to structure and operate the FCRPS. That decision will not be considered in the EIS here being proposed. The National Environmental Policy Act documentation for that decision has already been or is currently being prepared in a separate process.

In addition to the Framework and Federal Caucus processes, there are numerous other actions related to the development and implementation of BPA's fish and wildlife implementation plan. These actions include studies to address water quality issues in the Columbia and Snake Rivers, various salmon restoration plans, and a review of artificial

(hatchery) production. Still other processes may be identified during scoping. This EIS will use information from these efforts in its analysis.

NEED FOR THE EIS: BPA intends to reexamine the assumptions underlying its current fish and wildlife implementation plan. The purpose of the EIS is to compare the status quo implementation plan with alternatives derived from the other regional processes in an attempt to find a better way to achieve greater administrative efficiency, biological effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness while providing health and stability for the environment and economy.

Issued in Portland, Oregon, on October 8, 1999.

/s/ J. A. Johansen

J. A. Johansen

Administrator and

Chief Executive Officer